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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/836)

Mr. Beck: (Solomon Islands): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for facilitating the debate on this important item. My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/61/836) on United Nations system-wide coherence. The report of the High-level Panel is aimed at forging a stronger relationship between the United Nations and its Member States, especially the most vulnerable Members of the Organization — the least developed countries and the small island developing States.

Solomon Islands wishes first of all to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and the statement to be delivered by the representative of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Group of States.

I should like to take this opportunity to make a few preliminary comments, in my national capacity, on selected recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel.

On development issues, Solomon Islands welcomes the recommendation on the "One United Nations" country pilot programmes and hopes that in our discussions we will also consider the plight of those Members that do not as yet have any form of United Nations presence. My delegation wishes to point out that the Panel has failed to address the issue of countries in such situations.

The problem is that the concept of regionalism has been oversold to some subregions, resulting in the absence of a United Nations presence at the country level. Country programmes are indirectly micromanaged from a distance by regional processes, diluting the concept of country ownership. Solomon Islands hopes that during the substantive discussions, this matter — among others — will be discussed and addressed during our intergovernmental consultation process.

On a positive note, next month — nearly three decades after joining this institution — Solomon Islands will, for the first time ever, have a country United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Deputy Resident Representative. We sincerely welcome UNDP's leadership role and look forward to upgrading its presence to the Resident Representative level. My delegation further supports the Panel's recommendation to have one leader, one programme and one budget, and we would be interested in looking at the details involved in the application of such a concept to United Nations agencies that have a regional character and programmes.

On the issue of sustainable development, Solomon Islands supports the recommendation to establish a Sustainable Development Board to oversee the One United Nations programme, in the spirit of the

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principles outlined in the Group of 77 (G-77) statement. My delegation wishes further to propose that that body be charged with ensuring that a common evaluation formula is established to assess the development status of countries and that the formula is universally applied throughout the United Nations system.

At the moment, different formulas are used by different United Nations agencies. For instance, the Pacific was identified, in the recent summit report, as off-track in terms of meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Six of the 11 Pacific small island developing States are classified as least developed countries. However, an assessment done by the Economic and Social Council's Committee for Development Policy suggests otherwise. That assessment was made without examining the economic vulnerability of those States, thereby painting a picture that is foreign to the countries concerned and out of touch with the realities on the ground.

My delegation welcomes the recommendation on developing a common evaluation methodology, so that the needs of the country can truly be determined. We agree with the Secretary-General's proposal that such issues should be discussed and revisited by the relevant principal organs of the United Nations — the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. We would go even further and propose that the graduation issue for least developed countries be put on ice and revisited under a reviewed formula.

Solomon Islands supports the proposal on the establishment of an MDG trust fund and would like to see a built-in mechanism that would ensure accessibility and be directed at the most vulnerable Members of this institution. Alternatively, an additional trust fund could be established for the least developed countries, under the 2001-2010 Brussels Programme of Action, and another for the small island developing States, under the Mauritius Strategy. That would ensure that funding becomes predictable and translate international commitments into resources. My delegation looks forward to discussing the concept at greater length in a more structured setting.

Country ownership of the United Nations requires that the universal character of the Organization be preserved. The composition of the Secretariat's staff must reflect the diversity of its membership. Currently, of the 30,548 United Nations staff, only one is a Solomon Islands national, who works at Headquarters; indeed, nationals of 20 countries make up 62 percent of staff members. That lone staff member had to travel abroad to sit for the United Nations exams. The United Nations recruitment process must be directed at the country level as well, thereby ensuring that a particular country's nationals are given the opportunity to serve in our multilateral institution.

One implication of this sad situation is that international civil servants working in the region do so with little knowledge of the special challenges facing the States in question. That is due to the fact that the Pacific is one of the least-studied subregions. Staff working in the region tend, upon arrival, to go through a cycle of hosting regional workshops to get a sense of direction; that approach has made the Pacific one of the most "workshopped" subregions, globally speaking.

In the area of humanitarian issues, Solomon Islands would like to see the recommendation properly defined, and it would like to see humanitarian response fall under the State National Disaster Authority, with the strong support of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The goal is to ensure that the coordination of assistance is carried out effectively and with surgical precision. Secondly, we must see to it that there is a mechanism in place to ensure a United Nations system-wide response, with immediate intervention by the relevant United Nations agencies in order to deal with wounded or displaced persons.

As Solomon Islands was recently hit by a tsunami — just two weeks ago — that claimed more than 50 lives and displaced more than 5,000 persons, my delegation believes that efforts should be mobilized immediately following a disaster to meet basic needs — for food, water and shelter. Other specific offers of assistance could be channelled at the national level via consultations and on request.

On that note, I wish to thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and all other partners for coming to our assistance and hope that an early-warning system, especially for locally generated tsunamis, will be given attention.

Finally, on the issue of the environment, Solomon Islands believes that the recommendation's focus on environmental governance is overemphasized. My delegation also believes that a more responsible means of protecting our fragile environment would be to

adopt a people- centred, rural-community-based economic approach; after all, the country's natural resources are owned by the people.

On the issue of strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), we would like to see the issue of the environment discussed system-wide as a development, social and security issue. My delegation hopes that all principal organs of the United Nations will be involved in the consideration of the issue, given its multifaceted character.

I will close by assuring you, Madam President, and the Deputy Secretary-General of our support and cooperation in building an efficient, coherent and accountable multilateral institution that is able to reach the excluded and the most vulnerable.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): My Government strongly supports the "Delivering as one" report. We look forward to a process that will ensure a timely follow-up of the set of recommendations. We appreciate this opportunity for a first discussion of the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence.

We are convinced that the recommendations, taken together, will strengthen the United Nations and help it be more effective in support of country needs and demands in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

At the heart of the High-level Panel report is the recommendation to establish, where appropriate, One United Nations in each country. With Governments in the driver's seat, and on a voluntary basis, there should be one leader, one programme, one budget framework and one office, where feasible. Such a framework, in each country, should be supported by more coherent governance and management arrangements in the regions and at Headquarters. The High-level report also suggests concrete ways to ensure that One United Nations programmes and organizations receive adequate, sustained and secure funding.

We appreciate the broad support for the recommendations by the Secretary-General, heads of United Nations agencies and many Governments. However, we have noted some concerns about the proposals. They include such questions as, are reforms a cost-cutting exercise? Will there be pressure on individual countries to implement reforms in the same way? And, finally, will the recommendations lead to more donor dominance over the United Nations?

The answer to all those questions is "no".

First, the intention of the Norwegian Prime Minister; his co-Chairs, the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and of Mozambique; and the rest of the High-level Panel, from around the world, was certainly not to provide fewer resources to the United Nations. Their ambition is to see the United Nations better resourced to carry out its tasks. All administrative savings should be used for development programmes in the countries where the savings are made.

As one of the staunchest supporters of the United Nations, the Norwegian Government will provide $25 million in additional resources to fund the eight One United Nations pilots this year. That funding will be over and above what we had already committed for the United Nations and the countries involved in the pilots. In addition, my Government will continue to provide multiyear pledges to key United Nations funds and programmes for development.

Secondly, in each country, the United Nations must be tailored to local priorities and specific needs. There can be no "one size fits all" policy. The reforms are intended to put programme countries more clearly in the driver's seat.

Thirdly, the resources should go to the areas that the country and the United Nations leader agree are the areas where the United Nations has the most to offer, rather than following donor priorities.

Allow me to address four areas where progress needs to be made swiftly.

First, with respect to gender, we look forward to the upcoming consultations to be held under your leadership, Madam President. We need urgent action to establish a strong gender entity in the United Nations. The existing gender architecture does important work, but it is weak and fragmented. The new entity should integrate and strengthen both operational and normative functions. It should have sufficiently high and independent status to participate in key governance structures in the United Nations, such as the Chief Executive Board. Therefore, the head of the gender entity must have the rank of Under-Secretary-General. The gender entity should have sufficient and predictable funding. Norway has proposed a floor target of minimum $200 million.

With regard to the other issues we will highlight, there is already sufficient mandate for follow-up action on the recommendations. Here, we look forward to the leadership of the Secretary-General and his team.

Secondly, there has already been timely follow-up of the One United Nations on pilots. We are pleased that there are now eight pilots from all regions, as it turned out to be impossible to limit the first round of pilots to the proposed five countries, due to the great interest shown. We understand that several countries have already volunteered to become pilots in the next phase.

Thirdly, concerning regional coherence, all United Nations entities at the regional level should be reconfigured so that there are common regional hubs that can service the United Nations country teams.

Finally, with regard to business practices, it is essential that the United Nations swiftly modernize and achieve full compatibility on processes for resource planning, human resources, common services and evaluation — all important drivers of coherence and efficiency in the United Nations system. Overall, the performance and accountability of the United Nations must be strengthened. We look forward to the review of the Chief Executives Board and to the transformation of the United Nations Development Group into a United Nations-wide Development Policy and Operations Group.

The world of today is different from the world as it was when the United Nations was created. The United Nations, too, has changed, but we see a United Nations with a growing gap between what is expected of it and what it can deliver for developing countries.

Norway will actively participate in the upcoming negotiations. We have to modernize and strengthen the United Nations. The most radical decision that we can make about the Organization is to decide that we do not have the political will to change it.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks you, Madam President, for having convened this debate. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report on the recommendations of the High-level Panel (A/61/836). Switzerland appreciates the Secretary-General's support for the principle of a more effective and more coherent Organization, as recommended in the report. We share his view that the United Nations system needs to be results-based and focused on performance and accountability. This imperative of efficiency, transparency and accountability is at the heart of the demands from Member States for United Nations reform. We wish to emphasize that it is a fundamental characteristic of a system that seeks to respond to the needs of developing countries.

The United Nations system is a repository of expertise in most of the areas related to social and economic development. The Organization has legitimacy as a forum for establishing norms and standards; it also has an excellent field representation network and considerable operational capacities. All those assets should enable the United Nations to position itself as a central and relevant pillar of the development cooperation architecture of the twenty-first century.

However, that means carrying out the urgent changes specified in the report "Delivering as one" (A/61/583). First, on the ground, where the Organization's funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other operational entities must subordinate their particular interests to their United Nations identity, they must speak with one voice and coordinate their responses to national needs. It is also important to take a country's whole development cooperation landscape into account, while preventing the United Nations from being preoccupied mainly with itself. We must position the Organization within a true partnership approach.

Many of the report's recommendations are linked one to another and form an integrated and coherent whole. As our Organization is already equipped with a number of mechanisms enabling it to manage its own transformation, we support a multitrack approach, as proposed by the Secretary-General. Such an approach would enable us to utilize and even strengthen existing intergovernmental or interagency decision-making mechanisms. It would also enable us to involve various relevant actors in a flexible manner, depending on the context and the specific needs of each track.

I should like to comment briefly on this multiperspective approach. First, we are convinced that operational questions are best addressed in the context of the deliberations on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. We also believe that the review process is the appropriate framework for

analysing the results and experiences of the One United Nations pilot programmes and for ensuring intergovernmental follow-up on them.

Because most of the report's recommendations concerning United Nations humanitarian assistance strengthen or call for the implementation of decisions already taken by the General Assembly, we believe that they do not require intergovernmental discussions on that subject outside existing processes.

The recommendations related to the environment should be addressed in the context of the Assembly's informal consultative process on international environmental governance. We must also take into account the relevant discussions and decisions of other intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Global Ministerial Environment Forum and the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. In the context of that process, a certain consensus seems to have been achieved regarding the challenges of the current system. Therefore, we do not believe that an independent assessment of the United Nations international environmental governance is necessary at this stage.

The recommendations concerning new institutional structures at United Nations Headquarters and on governance issues deserve in-depth study. Switzerland believes that a technical analysis by a special independent team, as proposed in the report, would be useful in the elaboration of more detailed and specific proposals on rationalizing and consolidating various United Nations entities.

Switzerland also believes that implementing the proposal to establish a post of Under-Secretary-General for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, who would lead a unique structure, would very significantly strengthen efforts to attain the objectives that we have set for ourselves.

While a large number of the report's recommendations are interlinked and form an integrated and coherent whole, some delegations have urged that the consideration of the report conclude with a General Assembly resolution concerning the report in its entirety. My country believes that such a comprehensive resolution would be detrimental to the scope and authority of existing formal mechanisms. Thus, we believe that the report's comprehensive objectives would be better served if the various proposals were considered first in terms of their own merits and in the context of the existing processes that I have mentioned. Such consideration would not necessarily exclude an overall general assessment of the report and its implementation by the General Assembly, but that should be done as a second step.

The eight One United Nations pilot programmes launched by interested Member States and by the United Nations Development Group are valuable opportunities to test the implementation in various countries of the principles advocated in the report. The principle of ownership of the pilot programmes by the countries themselves is an obvious prerequisite for their success. Another important factor will be the quality of the leadership of the United Nations entities called upon to participate in these programmes, as well as effective participation by specialized agencies, particularly the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organization, UNESCO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Their participation will in turn depend on various factors: the will of the authorities of the pilot countries themselves, the clarity of the guidance provided by the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and, finally, the capacity of donor countries to ensure the governmental coherence of their policy towards and funding of the specialized agencies.

I should like to emphasize a final difficulty to be overcome to ensure a proper framework for the success of these pilot programmes: the capacity of donor countries to adapt their financing modalities to a budgetary framework that is unified at the country level, while according sufficient priority to the core funding of the operational entities.

Finally, in the light of those observations, we encourage proposing to the General Assembly a multitrack process that is based as much as possible on existing intergovernmental mechanisms. Switzerland reaffirms its full support for the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and by you yourself, Madam President, to ensure appropriate follow-up to the report and its recommendations.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): Madam President, I thank you for organizing these timely meetings and for your statement yesterday, in which, among other things, you appealed to all of us to offer our views and suggestions on the substantive issues. I furthermore thank the Secretary-General for introducing his ideas

on follow-up to the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/583), which we broadly share.

Iceland, as a member of the European Economic Area, aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by Ms. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, on behalf of the European Union, but in addition I would like to make a few very brief remarks.

Generally, we support the proposals made by the Panel. We should use this opportunity to make the United Nations more effective and coherent on the basis of the reports of both the Panel and the Secretary-General (A/61/836). It should always be kept in mind that the reason behind this exercise is to foster more effective development cooperation, focusing on the concerns and needs of developing countries. There should be no one-size-fits-all approach and the idea to use pilot countries to test the "One United Nations" approach is a good method to find the most effective way to respect the varying needs of each country.

Most proposals of the Panel could be implemented within the existing reform processes, and Iceland shares the Secretary-General's view that on these issues we should move ahead and avoid duplication of efforts. There are, however, a few issues that need separate processes, such as governance and the gender architecture.

I would like to place special emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment. The empowerment of women is a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are lagging behind in our pursuit of the MDGs related to women. They cannot be met without radical changes in the work of the United Nations. The recommendations of the Panel provide us with an important opportunity to strengthen the United Nations architecture that promotes gender equality throughout the United Nations system. Establishing the post of an Under-Secretary General for gender equality issues would be one important step in that regard. At the same time, we emphasize that gender mainstreaming must be more thoroughly and systematically addressed throughout the whole United Nations system, and at all levels.

To conclude, Madam President, I would like to thank you again for organizing those meetings. We look forward to discussing these issues further and in much more detail.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus): The delegation of Belarus would like to thank the Secretary-General for the thoughtful and sensible approach to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence and for his understanding of the paramount importance of the intergovernmental consideration of any reform proposals. We note with satisfaction that the head of the United Nations Secretariat rightly suggests the optimal formula for consideration of the ideas on how to improve the Organization's synergy and coherence. And those ideas naturally go beyond the boundaries of the High-level Panel report (A/61/583).

It is a businesslike and results-oriented approach without unnecessary reform fanfare and publicity and with the most sparing use of time and resources, as well as with the maximum use of the discussion and negotiation mechanisms available, that can lead us to significant progress in this field.

The main options for considering the recommendations on increasing United Nations system coherence have been accurately pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/836). Yet we believe that the key role in the process of the Economic and Social Council, the principal organ of the United Nations that deals with the issues of and coordinates the Organization's activities on development, humanitarian assistance and environment as a matter of institutional priority, should be highlighted more vividly. In our opinion, there is every reason to thoroughly discuss all ideas for improving coherence, including the recommendations in the High-level Panel's report, at the forthcoming substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

Although hardly a debatable issue — but one worthy of being reiterated at any opportunity — the decisive role of the General Assembly in considering and taking decisions on proposals to improve the system's coherence cannot be overestimated. In my delegation's view, a major analytical focus in the coming months should be provided by the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development at the next session of the General Assembly. We look forward to the opportunity to enrich our deliberations on system-wide coherence with the initial experience and feedback on the implementation of the eight pilot One Country Programmes.

Last but not least, notwithstanding all the understandable pressure and the weight of public expectation with regard to the United Nations reform exercise, we should try to preserve a very balanced and well-considered approach to the coherence-improving agenda. Our ability to engage in a process without prejudging its outcome and to ensure that not a single comparative institutional advantage is lost along the way will determine whether the ultimate result of our efforts will be transient and decorative or sustainable and substantive.

We believe in the General Assembly's ability to adopt well thought-out decisions on the reform of the operational activities of the United Nations system, and we are ready to contribute to reaching those decisions.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Madam President, my delegation wishes to thank you for taking the initiative to convene these meetings, which enable all of us to provide initial comments on the item before the Assembly. The delegation of Uruguay also notes with great satisfaction the submission of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/836) on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence.

Since the beginning of the United Nations reform process, Uruguay has pledged its full cooperation. It was in that spirit that we received the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) and the various initiatives taken in connection with the implementation of reforms with a view to improving the provision of services by the United Nations in the field and institutionalizing a more effective presence of the agencies in each country. We believe that such initiatives represent a good point of departure for reform that should be focused on goals that are fundamentally directed towards improving efficiency.

We believe that the effective implementation of the measures based on the report will require careful and in-depth discussion for each of the areas dealt with.

We are in an initial phase. A detailed reading of the content has just begun, as has an exchange of ideas with a view to adopting the proposals set out in the text. In our opinion, each thematic area in turn should be addressed with the flexibility needed to find solutions that are suited to its particular features.

With regard to the pilot plan to initiate some of the activities recommended in the report, Uruguay has enthusiastically joined this endeavour, in the belief that its experience will make a contribution to fuelling the debate on the reform process.

Uruguay believes that the pilot plan should be designed so as to promote active involvement by the national Government concerned, taking in account the particular characteristics of each country. Accordingly, we support the main thrust of the comments contained in the document, for example, the idea that cooperation for development should be based on national strategies and on plans prepared by developing countries; that there be sufficient flexibility to adapt to the specific needs, priorities and conditions of each country; and that the quality and quantity of assistance for development be maintained, as well as the various bodies involved in cooperation for development, South-South cooperation and trilateral cooperation.

Accordingly, Uruguay has set up a working group composed of representatives of the various departments of the national Government. The group will work in close cooperation with the Resident Representative of the United Nations system in Uruguay, and several meetings have already been held on the basis of the national pilot programme.

Uruguay trusts that the activities carried out this year will help to consolidate cooperation bodies, which could then be considered at later meetings.

We wish to reiterate that Uruguay is eager to share with other Member States its experiences and information on the outcome of our pilot experiment.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Our heads of State or Government, in the outcome document they adopted at the 2005 World Summit, advocated a strengthening of United Nations system-wide coherence and in particular called on the Secretary-General to undertake a further consolidation of the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities, with a view to enabling such activities to make a genuine contribution to the achievement of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Secretary-General should therefore, within that framework, propose for consideration by Member States means of establishing entities that would be

more strictly controlled in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

Benin welcomes the presentation today of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/836) entitled "Recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment".

The report, which is based largely on the conclusions reached by the High-level Panel set up by the previous Secretary-General, is a very timely one in that it will enable Member States resolutely to embark on discussions aimed at reaching agreement on ways and means to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations system.

As a prelude to the consultation process among States, Benin hosted — with the support of the Belgian and French Governments, which I would like to thank here — a seminar on 2 and 3 April 2007 in which nine countries of West and Central Africa participated. The seminar's goal was to promote a better understanding of the various recommendations contained in the Panel's report.

The Cotonou meeting made it possible to dispel some of the fears inherent in any reform process. It was unanimously recognized that the Panel's assessment of the functioning of the United Nations system could be perceived in all Member States and that the recommendations constituted an integrated whole resulting from the fragmentation of the United Nations system.

The participants noted, among other concerns, the need to define in the pilot countries criteria for the assessment and evaluation of the implementation in those countries of the One Country Programmes and to ensure, throughout the experimental phase, a process of continuous evaluation and the ongoing provision of information on the achievements made, the difficulties encountered and the measures taken to overcome such difficulties.

They underlined the need to ensure ongoing coordination and a continuous exchange of information with the Permanent Representatives in New York and the national structures involved, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in order to harmonize countries' positions and to bring the normative work of the organs of the United Nations system into line with the operational activities of the funds, programmes and agencies.

In addition, they recommended that the process of the process of informal dialogue at all levels continue, in order to facilitate agreement and perhaps even a consensus on the proposals contained in the High-level Panel's report.

In sum, the Cotonou meeting enabled countries from the same linguistic family fully to understand that important document — the report of the High-level Panel — whose impact on the functioning of the funds and programmes of the United Nations system at the country level may prove very decisive in the near future.

The coherence that we all wish to see created as a result of the reforms advocated by the Panel, which are supported by the Secretary-General, should enable all actors within the system to act as one, in a harmonious manner, so as to assist States in achieving the Millennium Development Goals as well as other development objectives, and, with respect to the least developed countries in particular, to achieve the goals set out in the Brussels Programme of Action for the Decade 2001-2010.

In that context, the establishment, at the country level, of a single United Nations entity endowed with one leader, one programme and a consolidated budget, with its offices grouped together in one single place, should in no case lead to the creation a superstructure that would be less operational and less effective.

Furthermore, the establishment of a Sustainable Development Board should in no way weaken the Economic and Social Council, whose role in the coordination of sustainable development efforts should remain a primary one.

With regard to the establishment of a United Nations body charged with responsibility for gender equality and the empowerment of women, Benin expresses the hope that the operational aspect of current efforts to promote gender equality will be preserved and strengthened so as to achieve concrete results in the field.

We must therefore, during the discussions we will be having at various levels, in particular during the triennial review of operational activities in 2007, ensure the achievement of the initial goals set by the

heads of State or Government in the outcome document of the 2005 Summit.

In that respect, we should also consider structural readjustment and the important issue of funding the operational activities of the United Nations system. Particular emphasis must be placed on the question of funding in order to endow the system with the necessary resources to implement our decisions and to ensure the success of the proposed reforms, because lack of resources is the main, if not the sole obstacle to financing for development. The Monterrey Consensus gave us a measure of hope. Allow us — the poor and least developed countries — to see those hopes realized through the translation of the process of reflection into a concrete reality.

In conclusion, Madam President, I wish to assure you of Benin's readiness to take an active part in the forthcoming discussions on the report recently submitted to us by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Koenders (Netherlands): This summer, we should be halfway towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but, unfortunately, we are lagging behind. Lagging behind means more poverty, fewer girls in school and more mothers dying when giving birth. To achieve our goals by 2015, we will all have to step up our efforts. By "we", I mean Governments, parliaments, civil society and the private sector in both developing and partner countries, as well as the United Nations and all other relevant actors, including the World Bank and the global programmes.

In my view, United Nations organizations have unique and invaluable expertise in many areas, but the United Nations is now too fragmented to translate that wealth of expertise into a coherent contribution to national development plans. In its report on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/583), the High-level Panel has presented us with proposals that could make the United Nations more efficient and effective. In particular, I strongly support the idea that the United Nations should work as one: one leader, one programme, one budget and, where possible, One office. Of course, that is not an entirely new idea; on several earlier occasions — most important, the triennial comprehensive policy review of 2004 — we decided that United Nations organizations should cooperate much more closely with one another. But we can remain timid about that no longer. This time, we have no choice but to reform the United Nations if we want to make sure that it is on the cutting edge in tackling major global problems.

As the German presidency of the European Union stated yesterday, we all seem to agree that reform of the United Nations is vital to ensure its continued prominence in the field of development. Now we have to do it. I am aware that in past decades, the issue of United Nations reform has produced very many reports and very good intentions, but very, very few concrete results. That, in my view, has led to dangerous frustration and scepticism about the United Nations as a whole. I am deeply worried about that. I sincerely hope that this time, we can show the world that we — Member States and United Nations organizations — are willing and able to adapt to the changing times. As the Secretary-General so aptly said, the United Nations can and should be more than the sum of its parts.

I welcome the fact that we are off to a good start. I am impressed by the commitment that so many members have shown in devising ways to increase the Organization's effectiveness at the country level. I admire the leadership demonstrated by the eight One United Nations pilot countries, and I am very pleased to see that an increasing number of other countries — such as Papua New Guinea, Malawi and Bangladesh — have also asked the United Nations to start working in unison. In that context, the Netherlands would like to express its full support for the statement made yesterday by the representative of Rwanda on behalf of a number of pilot and donor countries.

We in the Netherlands enjoyed the open discussions that we had with many other Members at the recent conferences held in Indonesia and Benin. We look forward to continuing those discussions with the countries of Latin America at the conference that the Netherlands is planning with the Nicaraguan Government, to be held in Nicaragua in June. I plan to attend it as a minister and to ensure the outreach of the One United Nations project in Latin America.

Several important points were raised during those conferences and in the important letter from the Group of 77, about which I would like to say a few words. First, a major advantage of the One United Nations concept would be increased ownership by recipient countries. In my view, the priorities of each One United Nations country programme should be formulated in very close consultation with the

Government, parliament, civil society and private sector concerned. That is indispensable.

Secondly, I agree that the reform process should not be used to introduce new conditionalities for development assistance. For crucial issues such as gender and the human-rights-based approach, I believe that we should continue current, well-established United Nations practices. After all, a development programme cannot be successful unless such principles are fully integrated.

Thirdly, the reform process should definitely not be a cost-cutting exercise; I think that that is important. If there are efficiency gains because of improved cooperation, these must benefit the country programmes.

Fourthly, there is indeed no one size to fit all.

Finally, I agree that it is crucial to increase both the quantity and the quality of development assistance. I must admit that I find the progress made by donor countries to be disappointingly slow. I am proud that, for decades now, my country, the Netherlands, has spent 0.8 per cent of its national income on development cooperation. But the Netherlands still falls short in providing stable, multi-year, non-earmarked funding, in spite of the progress that we have made in the past few years. I believe it is important to promise here that I will increase the amount of multi-year core funding for United Nations organizations that perform well and, in the near future, for One United Nations country programmes. I call on my colleagues in other donor countries to do the same.

Not only United Nations Member States, but the United Nations family itself, will have to demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and to invest time, energy and resources in the reform process. We in the Netherlands count on all United Nations organizations, including the specialized agencies, to actively participate in the reform process. I am glad to see that the World Bank, for example, is interested in participating in One United Nations pilots, in particular those in Albania and Cape Verde. In addition, I would urge the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish an effective firewall as soon as possible. It is imperative that the functions of the Resident Coordinator be separate from those of the UNDP Country Director. I have decided to give additional funds to the UNDP for that purpose.

As the Secretary-General has stated, the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) should be seen in the context of ongoing reform initiatives. In order to prevent any unnecessary delays, I would be in favour of a multitrack approach, basically along the lines proposed by the Secretary-General. One of those tracks would be the establishment of a new United Nations gender entity, which is very important. I have the impression that there is broad support for the creation of such a consolidated and strengthened gender entity, to be led by an Under-Secretary-General. I entirely agree with the Secretary-General that we should do this as soon as possible, because it is precisely in achieving Millennium Development Goals 3 and 5 — in the areas of women's empowerment and maternal health — that we lag far behind in meeting the targets that we have set for ourselves.

Naturally, overall coordination and oversight of the reform process should remain here, with the General Assembly.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): The Vietnamese delegation welcomes the convening of these plenary meetings to give Member States an opportunity to express their views on the important report entitled "Recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment" (A/61/836). We sincerely thank the Secretary-General for his submission of the report and for his efforts to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities.

My delegation shares the views of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China as reflected in the statement of the Joint Coordinating Committee, delivered yesterday by His Excellency Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan.

While looking forward to hearing the views of other Member States and participating in the process of consultations to consider the High-level Panel's recommendations, we would like to echo the fundamental approach supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States: that economic and social development should remain the centrepiece of deliberations at the United Nations and that the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals,

should continue to be the overarching framework of United Nations activities.

In spite of its advantages in knowledge, skills, experience and human resources, the effectiveness of the United Nations in assisting the socio-economic development of Member States is limited due to the lack of coherence in policies, the overlapping of programmes and the shortage of needed funds. This weakness is manifesting itself more clearly than ever at the country level. United Nations country teams have pointed out the fact that while calling for reforms elsewhere, the United Nations is engaging in the old habits of institutional proliferation, poor coordination and absence of focus; that while concentrating technical expertise in Headquarters and regional centres, the United Nations is hollowing out country offices; and that, for all those reasons, the United Nations is becoming vulnerable to the charge of incompetence.

In this context, we realize the need for system-wide reform aimed at achieving coherence, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the operational activities of the United Nations. At the country level, we support the implementation of the One United Nations approach on a voluntary basis, taking into account national conditions and priorities. The purpose of implementing the One United Nations concept, as proposed by the High-level Panel, in a number of pilot countries is to allow the United Nations system to develop approaches that will enhance the coherence of the Organization at the country level, increase efficiency and reduce transaction costs for host countries.

We share the assessment that for the successful implementation of the One United Nations approach in a programme country, the availability of sufficient funds for all country programmes must be ensured; administrative procedures for implementing programmes must be simplified; United Nations programmes must be aligned with the recipient country's socio-economic development plans and must conform to its development priorities; and there must be ownership by the recipient country of United Nations programmes. As you have pointed out, Madam President, the outcome of these pilots will be an essential element for the intergovernmental consultations on the operational effectiveness of the United Nations.

In the process of working with United Nations agencies that operate in our country, Viet Nam has, over the past years, actively engaged stakeholders in the country in a national consultative process aimed at enhancing aid effectiveness. That approach has led to the development of the Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness as the contextualization of the Paris Declaration on the same subject. Our voluntary acceptance of the implementation of the One United Nations initiative in Viet Nam, which bears a close similarity to the recommendations of the High-level Panel — namely, one plan, one budget, one set of management practices and one United Nations house — is a further expression of our strong support for initiatives aimed at enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations at the country level.

Viet Nam and the United Nations agencies operating in the country enjoy a special relationship of cooperation, understanding and trust. That allows us to hope for successful implementation of the One United Nations initiative in our country. However, as it is a pilot programme, all the answers are still ahead of us. Furthermore, one size does not fit all. We hope that our experience in implementing the pilot will be a valuable lesson not only for Viet Nam but also for other countries.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico welcomes the submission of the report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence (A/61/836). My delegation appreciates in particular the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the intergovernmental consultative process concerning this subject within the reform efforts of the Organization.

On this occasion, my delegation will focus its comments on questions relating to the process; we will await the forthcoming consultations to discuss substantive issues.

Mexico agrees with what the Secretary-General has said concerning the importance of considering the recommendations as a whole and benefitting from the ongoing processes, including the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development and the consultations of the General Assembly on the institutional framework for United Nations environmental activities.

However, the challenge is to be able to ensure that there is comprehensive vision of the process while discussing in a fragmented way the recommendations which, taken as a whole, seek to give greater coherence to the operational activities of the Organization.

My delegation believes that one way to ensure this would be, with respect to operational activities for development, to begin initially with the triennial policy review process which will begin during the next substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and which would culminate in the adoption of a resolution at the next session of the General Assembly.

The questions concerning governance at the Headquarters and the regional levels which should go hand in hand with what is agreed to in the context of the triennial policy review could be considered at a second stage, once the aforementioned resolution has been adopted. That would then have the benefit of the specific measures to strengthen coordination of operational activities in the field. At that time, it would be possible to consider whether or not to establish an executive board for sustainable development and to consider strengthening the coordinating function of the Economic and Social Council or other means of enhancing coherence and coordination at the Headquarters level.

With respect to the environment, Mexico agrees with the Secretary-General's proposal that ongoing consultations of the General Assembly on the institutional framework for the environment should take up the High-level Panel's recommendations on that subject. However, recommendations concerning sustainable development and operational activities in the field should, in my delegation's opinion, be considered within the context of the triennial policy review process.

With respect to gender, my delegation believes that, since there is no established process for discussions on gender architecture, discussions could begin soon within a framework designed specifically for that purpose. In any case, the consultations should include an integrated analysis of the current system and of the political, organizational and budgetary consequences of this proposal.

I wish to conclude my statement, Madam President, by reaffirming my delegation's full support and to assure you of our active and constructive participation during this process.

Mr. Cho Hyun (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for presenting his report (A/61/836) yesterday. We welcome the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in the report, which provide a comprehensive map for future discussion of this very important issue.

We share the view that the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) merits careful review and further dialogue to build a broad-based common understanding of its objectives, its content and its proposals. My delegation believes that implementing many of the recommendations set out in the report will bring about substantive improvements in United Nations operational activities in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to proceed with the United Nations Development Group's initiative to carry out eight pilot projects based on the One Country Programme, in which the One United Nations approach will be pursued. We believe that the outcome of the pilot projects and the subsequent analysis of their results will give us more solid ground on which to move forward with the High-level Panel's other recommendations. Undoubtedly, that will be a good starting point.

We also recognize that the governance issue referred to in the Panel's report is an important topic that requires in-depth study. We note that it would be useful to establish a Sustainable Development Board, but we believe that a broad consensus has to be generated to establish such a new body. As for the issue of gender equality, we believe that, in light of the current fragmented structure of the Secretariat, an early decision based on a consensus is needed and that it can be achieved.

All Member States agree on the necessity of reorganizing the United Nations system so that it can achieve its goals more effectively and efficiently, without duplication of functions or failures of coordination. The difficulty is finding a consensus among Member States on how to accomplish that urgent task.

Implementing necessary reforms inevitably involves significant challenges. At times, it will require that Member States and United Nations organs sacrifice their short-term interests for the long-term good of the Organization. I hope that we will consult closely to find a consensus and work together to achieve our common goals.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my Government's continuing commitment to the ongoing effort to reform the United Nations in order to enhance its coherence and strength so that it can meet the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Ms. Takaku (Papua New Guinea): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the small island developing States (SIDS) of the Pacific Islands Forum: Fiji, Nauru, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Papua New Guinea.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report in response to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/836) and note his broad support for them. We commend him for his proposals regarding the next steps to be taken in considering the Panel's recommendations. In that respect, we are pleased that the Deputy Secretary-General will lead the efforts to implement the system-wide coherence agenda. We look forward to working with her, fellow Member States, the United Nations system and you, Madam President, in carrying that important work forward.

We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) will contribute to the wider United Nations reform agenda. We agree that the Panel's proposals provide an effective means of reducing fragmentation and maximizing the impact of United Nations work in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment — particularly at the country level, where it matters most to us.

We believe that many of the recommendations on "Delivering as One" are suitable for the circumstances in our region, given the extremely large maritime area that we occupy. Given that situation, it is our view that efficiency and effectiveness could be best achieved under the proposed system. Quite frankly, while there has been delivery, the current system has provided it ineffectively and inefficiently. Fortunately, that situation is now being addressed as we review the Panel's proposals and recommendations. Indeed, we agree that the United Nations system must be more results-based, efficient and accountable.

Bearing in mind the continuation of this debate and the discussions on all the topics put forward by the Panel, we wish to highlight three issues.

First is the One United Nations concept. We note that that important initiative of the Panel is being tested in practice by the eight One United Nations pilot countries. We welcome the fact that those countries have volunteered to be pilots. We believe that their experiences and lessons as pilots will play a large part in helping us to review our reform efforts in areas such as ensuring a better delivery process at the country level and being supported and enabled by equally coherent and effective processes and systems at both the regional and headquarters levels.

While our Pacific Islands Forum SIDS are not on the initial list of pilots, we, like many other developing countries, want to be considered in the next round of pilots. However, I can add that my own country, Papua New Guinea, commenced this process prior to the Panel's final report and will continue carrying it out, despite the fact that we are not among the current eight pilot countries. Needless to say, we will closely follow the progress of the pilots, and we look forward to receiving the analysis made and the lessons learned as a result of their experiences.

With regard to gender, we all understand the need to get that part of the development paradigm right. There is no doubt that the United Nations must effectively promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights. To do so would add value to the overall well-being of our countries, especially in terms of healthier and stronger families, and would enable a large part of our communities to become actively and effectively involved in the development of our Pacific Islands Forum SIDS.

Therefore, the Panel's recommendation to strengthen the United Nations gender architecture is welcome. The Forum SIDS support the Panel's proposal to make an appointment at the highest political level — preferably that of Under-Secretary-General — to oversee that important matter. Furthermore, such a person would oversee a unified approach to addressing and strengthening the gender architecture of the United Nations. We sincerely hope

that this recommendation can be moved on quickly and that it will meet with broad support.

The SIDS of the Pacific Islands Forum see environmental issues as an extremely important part of the reform process. With the many pressing global issues related to the environment, and with the survival of many SIDS of the Pacific Islands Forum at risk, there is a need to review the governing architecture. However, our strong view is that the reform process in this respect needs to be cognizant of the realities on the ground. While the current systems have delivered, much of the substantive focus has been on creating a situation through enabling activities as opposed to projects carried out in real time and on the ground. Too often the bureaucracy of the process has diluted the actual process of implementation on the ground. So, we reiterate the need to ensure that any reform proposal addresses the issues on the ground, so that implementation becomes paramount, rather than engendering a series of processes like those which have always benefited others and not the intended recipients of the intervention.

The SIDS of the Pacific Islands Forum support the Secretary-General's proposed approach for taking the Panel's recommendations forward. We hope that there will be flexibility and goodwill, so as to avoid disagreements in some areas and so as not to hold up progress in others where consensus exists or is possibly within reach. In taking the process forward it will be important to match decision-making with the relevant and appropriate United Nations bodies or individuals. We note that some recommendations will fall under the authority of the Secretary-General while others will lie within the purview of other senior executives across the United Nations system. Other recommendations will require intergovernmental consideration and agreement.

In conclusion, I quote the Secretary-General, who has said that "The true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most" (*A/61/PV.31, p. 9*). We are pleased that he has seized this opportunity to move the United Nations reform agenda forward. We hope that there will be discussion about improving the Organization's performance and its capacity to deliver results in its critical mandates on development, humanitarian assistance, human rights and the environment, and we hope that those consultations will move forward in a structured way.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks you, Madam President, for convening these meetings and welcomes the interest that you and the Secretary-General have shown in the consideration of this important matter. My delegation associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/836) on this theme and thank Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his introduction of that report yesterday. We agree that initiatives on system-wide coherence constitute a valuable opportunity, in particular, to ensure greater progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, as well as to strengthen the role of the United Nations in this sphere.

My delegation wishes to make a few comments on the process that should be followed. We want to stress that, as we initiate a dialogue on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence we will not be starting from square one. As the report of the Secretary-General points out, many processes, including several related to reform, have preceded this exercise and have dealt with matters addressed in the Panel's recommendations. We believe that ongoing reform processes must be taken into account when defining the follow-up to the recommendations. Examples are the General Assembly's forthcoming triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the informal consultative process on the institutional framework for United Nations environmental activities and the consideration of humanitarian issues by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

Thus, the Panel's recommendations should be considered within the framework of the relevant ongoing reform processes. Through agreed modalities, the General Assembly could then deal with issues not addressed by those processes, in addition to conducting overall follow-up and assessment of the discussions taking place in various forums.

With respect to the various thematic areas, it should be recalled that at the 2005 World Summit it was agreed to carry out an exercise on the coherence of operational activities in the areas of humanitarian

assistance and the environment. It is important that that exercise remain within the mandate set by the General Assembly at the highest political level. At its initial stages, it would be appropriate for the consideration of the report of the Panel (A/61/583) and the opinions submitted by the Secretary-General to take the form of an informal dialogue, which would give countries and regional groups an opportunity to gather further information before undertaking a process of consultations. Such an informal dialogue could begin with consideration of the general objectives and the approach of the report of the Panel. At subsequent meetings, the thematic areas agreed upon at the 2005 Summit could be addressed in sequence.

Finally, my delegation stresses the importance of ensuring that this process is led at the highest possible level, both within the General Assembly and in the Secretariat.

Mr. Botora (Ethiopia): I would like first of all to join previous speakers in welcoming the report of the Secretary-General, which is contained in document A/61/836, on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. The report, which is brief and concise, addresses the various proposals and recommendations of the Panel in some detail and indicates the broad support of the Secretary-General for the Panel's suggestions. We welcome the Secretary-General's initial positive reaction to the Panel's report and consider his suggestions, together with the report of the Panel itself (A/61/583), to constitute a good basis for our future consultations.

We also wish to take this opportunity to stress the important role that you, Madam President, can play in facilitating and expediting the process of consultations on the reports of the Panel and of the Secretary-General. We are confident that you will take up that responsibility, in the way that you have willingly done in the past.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan in his capacity as Chairman of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China. In that regard, we wish to stress that, as clearly indicated in that joint statement, national development strategies, policy guidelines and programmes, as well as the overall ownership of the development activities of developing countries, should not be undermined or sidelined as a result of the suggested approach. We strongly believe that developing countries should be supported based on their own development programmes and strategies. Reform of the operational activities of the United Nations should therefore be geared towards responding to the needs of developing countries as reflected in their development priorities.

We welcome the general thrust of the reports of the Panel and the Secretary-General with regard to restructuring the operational activities of the United Nations, with a view to reducing duplication and costs as well as to making our Organization use its resources wisely and more effectively. In this regard, we would like to stress that implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, in particular the Millennium Development Goals, should continue to receive our highest attention.

The allocation of adequate resources and the efficiency of the assistance delivery system for development cooperation equally deserve our serious attention and consideration. The agreements reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) were very helpful in taking the efforts to increase financing for operational activities for development a step further. As a consequence, encouraging results have begun to emerge both in the level of performance of developing countries and in the commitment of development partners to assist. Obviously, the proposals and recommendations of the Panel should take this into account and build on it.

As members are well aware, enhancing the coordination, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the operational activities, along with increasing the financing base of the United Nations operational system, has been the subject of recent triennial reviews. We believe that these reviews are an important mechanism for scrutinizing operational activities for development that must be involved when considering the Panel's proposals and implementing recommendations contained in the report. In this respect, we share the valid point made by the Secretary-General in his report that the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review provides an important opportunity to consider and take forward relevant recommendations of the Panel.

We are of the view that the report of the High-level Panel deserves thorough intergovernmental consideration through a careful, transparent and

positive approach. As indicated by the Secretary-General, some of the recommendations of the Panel, such as those related to the environmental and humanitarian fields, could be considered in the current ongoing reform processes. Most of the recommendations with regard to operational activities could also be addressed in conjunction with agenda items of the General Assembly or of the Economic and Social Council. Still others require further elaboration by relevant experts.

In conclusion, we are positively inclined to think that, with the basic thrust of both reports and the deliberations on them by Member States and relevant bodies of the United Nations system, there exists an opportunity to further strengthen our Organization's overall working system. We will constructively engage in the consultations on this issue which is so important to our organization and its Member States.

Mr. Sorcar (Bangladesh): Madam President, my delegation would like to commend you for convening these meetings. Our appreciation goes to the Secretary-General for his report on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/836).

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by Pakistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China. We would, however, like to add the following points. The High-level Panel report (A/61/583) contains some practical recommendations that warrant intergovernmental consideration. It dwells on some issues that are currently being taken up under other reform processes. These recommendations should be considered by the relevant ongoing processes.

Development is inherently a multidimensional undertaking. It encompasses economic, social and environmental aspects, as emphasized in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The United Nations, the apex of multilateralism, must address these dimensions in a comprehensive manner. The functions and activities of the individual organizations of the United Nations system are varied, but are geared towards a common purpose. Together they can make the system more effective in the implementation of the goals and targets of international conferences and summits.

The diverse mandates of the United Nations system organizations cover a wide spectrum of concerns and areas for international cooperation. Coordination and coherence among those entities is essential for maximizing each of the Organization's distinct comparative advantages and for enabling the United Nations system as a whole to respond effectively to the demands of our time.

The United Nations reform initiative should not be prejudiced by any preconceived conclusion. It should not be merely a cost-cutting exercise. The process that has begun with the objective of redressing overlapping and duplication should not generate further duplication. We concur with the Secretary-General that specific proposals to improve system-wide coherence require a more in-depth analysis. We believe that this exercise will see fruition if a transparent and inclusive intergovernmental process is followed.

The recommendation of the Panel to set up a clear accountability framework for United Nations Resident Coordinators is important. Mutual accountability of the Resident Coordinator and the country team is critical. However, the proposed results-based funding mechanism generates a grave concern. The ultimate price of poor performance by the United Nations country team should not fall on the programme country.

Accountability has to be appropriately set or the approach will be fallacious. We need further discussions on the mechanism and framework of the accountability of the Resident Coordinator and his team. Bangladesh strongly believes that the activities and performance of the Resident Coordinator and the country team should be evaluated by the national Government. It will enhance the efficiency and results of United Nations activities.

United Nations programmatic work at the country level should focus on sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty alleviation. It should be done in line with national development strategies. Experience suggests that donor assistance can deliver better results when provided as direct budgetary support.

The effectiveness of the United Nations development system greatly depends on a stable, predictable, long-term and expanding resource base. Core resources are the bedrock of United Nations operational activities. The current trend of insufficient core resources represents the single most important constraint to the performance of developing countries

and development entities. The provision of coherence and synergy should be linked to a mechanism of multi-year funding commitments for core resources of United Nations operational activities. The Panel report does not give any outline of how the core resources could be enhanced and how to ensure long-term predictability of the use of the funds.

Finally, Madam President, allow me to assure you of my delegation's full support in your efforts to move the process forward. My delegation stands ready to engage in a constructive debate to consider the recommendations of the Panel.

Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia): Like other delegations before me, Madam President, I would like to thank you for convening these meetings and the Secretary-General for his report (A/61/836). My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation will confine itself to observations in three areas: first, in the follow-up process related to the Panel's recommendations, the need to clearly demarcate what constitutes managerial prerogative and what constitutes the prerogatives of Member States; secondly, the need to ensure that decisions made are evidence-based; and thirdly, the importance of ensuring that there is coherence in the way coherence is pursued.

On the first point, I would like to commend the report for the emphasis placed on the need to have the intergovernmental process fully engaged in the follow-up on the Panel's recommendations. Having said that, it should be recalled that in presenting the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) in November last year, the former Secretary-General indicated that some of the recommendations made by the High-level Panel could be acted on immediately, as they were within the prerogative of the management of the various United Nations agencies. On the other hand, other recommendations had to first be endorsed by the intergovernmental process.

Many delegations expressed misgivings about this view, as it was not clear as to where the lines of distinction between managerial prerogatives and the prerogatives of the intergovernmental process were to be drawn or, more fundamentally, how these lines are to be drawn.

Since then, developments surrounding the reorganization of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Disarmament Affairs have clearly indicated the political sensitivity surrounding any restructuring effort. Given this, and the fact that the present report indicates that attempts are already under way to implement some of the High-level Panel's recommendations, my delegation feels that the present report should have included some benchmarks to stimulate discussion on this important issue.

We feel that that would go a long way in allaying fears of what could be termed as making changes through the back door. However, we are disappointed that the report does not address this issue in any material way. For Malaysia's part, we believe that, as a rule of thumb, any structure or activity that arises out of an intergovernmental agreement should be viewed as falling within the prerogative of the intergovernmental process.

Secondly, in order to ensure that the atmosphere surrounding the discussions remains congenial and that the decisions made are the best that can be achieved, it is essential that these decisions be evidence-based. That, in turn, requires that the best information be made available to all delegations in a non-discriminatory way. In this respect, in welcoming the Secretary-General's decision to assign the Deputy Secretary-General to oversee and support the implementation process, Malaysia believes that she should also ensure that the relevant information flows smoothly. As a first step, I would like to suggest that names and contact numbers of all officers in the Offices of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General involved in this exercise be made available to all delegations.

Thirdly, my delegation is concerned at the increasing lack of coherence in the way that the coherence process is being pursued. For example, the issue of the One Country Programme pilots of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will be taken up not only in this process, but also in the UNDP strategic plan process and in the triennial comprehensive policy review. Ensuring the coherence of this process constitutes a great challenge not only for you, Madam President, but also for the entire membership and the Secretariat.

On that note, I would like to conclude my statement, Madam President, by assuring you of

Malaysia's full support for you as you guide us through this process.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China supports the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his views on the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583), as that has enabled us to promptly start a discussion of relevant issues. China has always supported United Nations reform in the economic and social fields and the establishment of a more coherent and effective United Nations system, through comprehensive and democratic consultations.

The principal mission of United Nations reform in the economic, social and development fields should be to promote common development. It should also aim to make promotion of common development its principal mission. It should also aim to increase United Nations input for development, ensure the existence of development resources and strengthen development agencies, while at the same time improving the efficiency and coherence of the United Nations system.

Reform of the operational activities of the United Nations should adhere to the principles of breadth, universality and neutrality, while at the same time ensuring recipient countries' ownership of programmes and independence in programme formulation and implementation. Reform at the Headquarters level should focus on improving efficiency and coherence. The role of agencies with obvious professional advantages should not be weakened. Reform at the country level should treat each individual country according to its own national conditions and respect the will of the Governments of recipient countries. We should first assess the experience gained from pilot country programmes and then carry out an intergovernmental evaluation and review.

Environmental reform should be conducted within the framework of global sustainable development. The design and reform of environmental agencies should be linked with existing mechanisms such as the Commission on Sustainable Development. Reform in this field should focus on how to fulfil the commitments of developed countries on financial and technology transfers and strengthen capacity-building in developing countries.

In its renewed efforts to promote gender equality and human rights, The United Nations should focus on the provision of services. Reform of the three key entities dealing with women and gender equality should be aimed at improving their functioning and efficiency, increasing inputs and mainstreaming gender equality in the work of the United Nations.

China supports a strengthened role for the Economic and Social Council. We support enhanced cooperation and coordination among the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. China encourages the United Nations to increase guidance for the World Bank on the basis of respect for its principle of depoliticization. Reform of funding mechanisms should be based on full consultation without undue haste.

The recommendations in the report of the High-level Panel touch upon many issues. Hence the need for full consultation and coordination among Member States. Here, I would like to make few points on the process upon which the General Assembly is about to embark.

First, we share the view expressed by the Secretary-General that the recommendations contained in the report should be reviewed as an integrated and coherent whole and should first be thoroughly discussed by the General Assembly in an efforts to agree on reform programmes that are conducive to the strengthening of the functioning, coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations, on the basis of a wide-ranging consensus.

Secondly, we have noted the divergent opinions on the recommendations. It is advisable to adopt a practical approach by initially taking up relevant, but less difficult issues. Discussions could begin in less problematic areas, such as humanitarian assistance and business practices, so as to create an enabling environment for narrowing differences and broadening consensus.

Thirdly, since the impact of development and operational activities is greatest on developing countries, more attention should be paid to the views expressed by those countries in the consultations. There is a need not only to summarize the experience of pilot countries, but also to heed the views of non-pilot countries in an effort to find practical reform that is acceptable to all parties.

The Chinese delegation will adopt a proactive and constructive approach in its participation in the

consultations on this matter, in a common joint effort to promote a broad consensus with regard to the reform of operational activities.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Chile is grateful to you, Madam President, for the convening of this meeting for the initial consideration of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment" (A/61/836).

The Panel's recommendations include important elements related to human rights, gender issues and sustainable development — all of which are already part of the United Nations system. The fact that those issues are highly interrelated means that they should form part of any holistic reform process to be undertaken.

We are pleased to note that the High-level Panel heeded the request of the Secretary-General and addressed the issue of the promotion of gender equality as a priority reform issue. We therefore hope to be able to make comments on the Panel's proposals in that regard.

My delegation believes that neither the Panel's report (A/61/583) nor the comments made yesterday by the Secretary-General leaves any doubt about the national ownership of programmes. The report makes that clear in asserting that programmes will be national property and that they will be formulated on the basis of requests made by a given sovereign State. We fully support that principle, as did the Chairperson of the Group of 77 speaking yesterday on behalf of the Group and the Non-Aligned Movement.

We also support the idea of institutional unification for development — the One United Nations approach — with regard to the establishment of a unified United Nations presence in countries, with a single official in charge and a single programme, a single budget and, as appropriate, a single office. That approach will contribute to overcoming fragmentation and eliminating the duplication of functions.

We also think that one of the basic elements that must be addressed is the current lack of predictability in United Nations funding for its various programmes. As the Panel's report clearly points out, as a result of waste, there is a lack of multi-year programmes for financing, which in turn makes the spending system fragmented and unpredictable.

We also believe that there is overlapping in the work of the World Bank and United Nations bodies. We therefore agree that there is a need for the Secretary-General, the President of the World Bank and the Director of the International Monetary Fund to establish a process to assess their respective functions and to cooperate closely while making use of their respective strengths and eliminating functional duplication as much as possible.

We welcome the idea of establishing a Sustainable Development Board as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council that would serve to strengthen the Council. We hope to further define our views on that subject in the future.

Likewise, we have keen interest in the idea of a global leaders' forum — the so-called "L-27" forum. We shall have more to say in detail on that at a later date.

We wish to underscore the importance that the report attaches to the need for the United Nations to continue to perform with greater coherence and substance its essential functions of standards-setting and advising countries in the implementation of international, regional and national norms. We developing countries need an appropriate environment that is regulated in a fair and objective manner and that opens up favourable prospects for our development plans. The United Nations should take advantage of the opportunity provided by this debate to strengthen its standards-setting mission and to reaffirm its central role as regards the governance of globalization, so as to produce the social protection networks needed to protect the weakest and most vulnerable.

Moreover, we wish to see a greater role for regional organizations. They should be given a strengthened mandate in promoting system coherence, given that they are the ones called upon to act upon, explain and coordinate the needs of each region. Of course, each case has different specificities to be considered. Chile is very pleased with the performance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. We believe that the lessons and experiences learned in the Latin American and Caribbean region could be of benefit to the United Nations system as a whole.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Member States involved in the initial pilot projects. That experience has resulted in a significant number of additional developing States becoming interested in participating in future projects. That is an auspicious beginning to the process of bringing greater coherence to United Nations efforts in the field.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to publicly consider in plenary meeting of the General Assembly the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/61/836) on the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/583), issued last November.

Over the past 60 years, despite shortcomings of which we are all aware, the United Nations has grown from a mechanism for keeping the peace into a multifaceted organ for the promotion of peace, development and human rights on a scale unknown in history. It is internationally recognized, effective in many areas of its mandates and rightly retains much of its prestige among ordinary people. Alongside that, we must also admit that there is a universally acknowledged need for ongoing reform and greater coherence, but neither of those elements, whether as processes or goals, has been achieved satisfactorily, despite numerous attempts to do so.

Even recent attempts to reform the United Nations have not been all that we could have wished for. The Human Rights Council — a vital part of the mandate of the United Nations and an important source of its global moral impact — still leaves much to be desired. That is due not only to inherited and subsequent inefficiencies but also to the apparent disintegration of international political will that would replace mere self-interest with the dispassionate and effective application of truly people-centred human rights policies. Many parts of the United Nations do deliver such policies — to the great benefit of many individuals and groups — but much could be improved.

Secondly, my delegation views positively the employment of the pilot schemes under way to test the One United Nations approach in developing countries, where many branches of the United Nations currently work side-by-side. The peoples of the countries that host most United Nations development initiatives urgently need a more efficient and coordinated United Nations on the ground.

Thirdly, the environmental machinery of the United Nations has been a Cinderella for too long. As the world faces unprecedented changes in the area of climate, coupled with demands for energy and the need for sustainable development, the Holy See would strongly support an independent and authoritative assessment of the current United Nations system of environmental governance. Such an assessment would be extremely timely in the present circumstances.

Finally, my delegation will continue to follow carefully the question of coherence regarding humanitarian assistance. On those occasions when many lives can be saved or lost as a result of the quality of the organization brought to bear, the United Nations can play an essential role in coordinating such assistance as may be quickly available, although it will surely be swifter and more effective when carried out in collaboration with those on the ground, who know the terrain.

The President: I would like to express my appreciation to all speakers, who contributed to an excellent opening discussion, both today and yesterday, on the coherence of United Nations development, humanitarian and environmental operations. It is very encouraging that, on such an important and far-reaching matter for the United Nations system and for the international standing of its development activities, so many Member States and such a wide variety of Member States, with different interests and perspectives, took the floor, including at the ministerial level. We heard encouraging remarks from representatives of a number of pilot countries that the process of reform at the country level is expected to produce results.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his welcome contribution and for the leadership that he has demonstrated on this issue. I shall continue to work closely with him and the Deputy Secretary-General during the forthcoming consultation process with Member States. Building on his letter and his report on the recommendations of the High-level Panel, the Secretary-General has reaffirmed his broad support for the report, as well as the need to take urgent steps to

improve the coherence and effectiveness of United Nations operational activities.

I should underline that, as President of the General Assembly, I will continue to be open to the views of all Member States on both substance and process as we go forward. We are at the beginning of a formal consultation process that will be transparent, inclusive and open to all constructive contributions. I will draw upon your comments during this debate and will further consult Member States. In due course, I will revert to members with my proposals on the best way to consider the recommendations in the report and those of the Secretary-General in a pragmatic, flexible and results-oriented manner.

The consultation process must enable to achieve the broadest possible agreement on how to strengthen the United Nations role in development. Our approach must carefully consider and build upon the Panel's recommendations. I appeal to all members to work together constructively on this issue so that we can conclude within a reasonable time frame. We must not lose sight of the fact that we all have an interest in a more effective United Nations — a United Nations that must strengthen itself so that it can address new global challenges and the diverse demands of the development priorities of Member States.

Given the importance of this issue to many Member States, I urge members to approach this matter pragmatically and with a degree of flexibility.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 113.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.